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BOOK CLIFFS RESOURCE AREA PLANNING GUIDELINES

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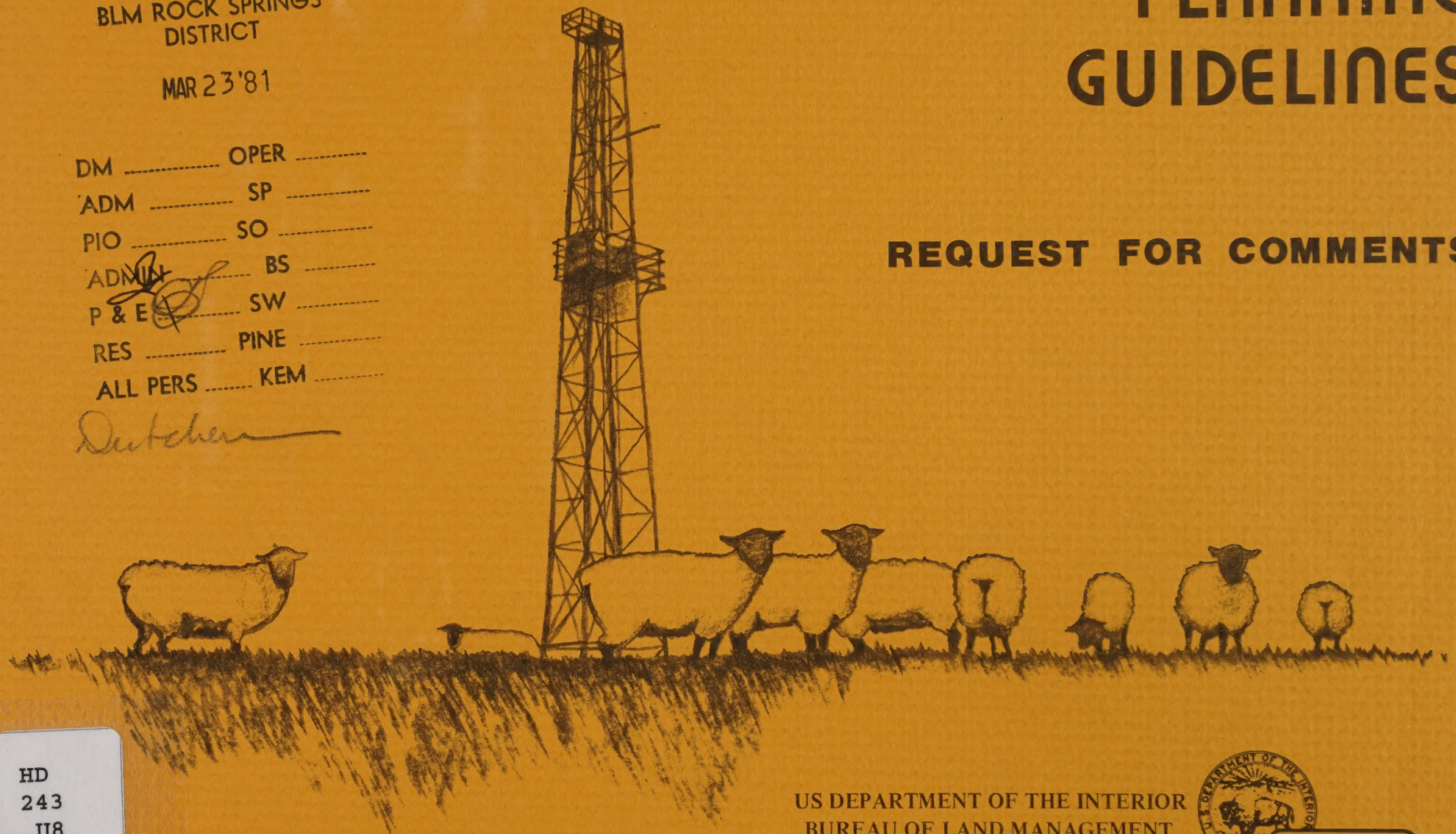
REQUEST FOR COMMENTS



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March 1981

US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Vernal District Office
120 South 5th East
Vernal, Utah 84078

A word from the Area Manager . . .

The opportunity to voice your opinion on future management of 1,032,000 acres of public lands in northeastern Utah is now. Your comments are needed by April 15, 1981 to help guide the resource inventory during the next two years.

A land use plan for management of the Bookcliffs Resource Area is in an early phase of development. The plan will be referred to as the Bookcliffs Resource Management Plan. You are encouraged to voice your concerns during all phases of this plan's development. Guidelines are now being established to resolve conflicts between various resource uses. These planning guidelines will be used to make decisions for resource management during the decade of the 80s.

I encourage you to review the enclosed draft guidelines and provide comments by April 15, 1981. Your comments and others received will be fully considered in determining future management of the Bookcliffs Resource Area. Please send your comments regarding these proposed Planning Guidelines to the Bureau of Land Management, 170 South 500 East, Vernal, Utah 84078 or telephone (801) 789-1362.

Dean Evans
Bookcliffs Area Manager

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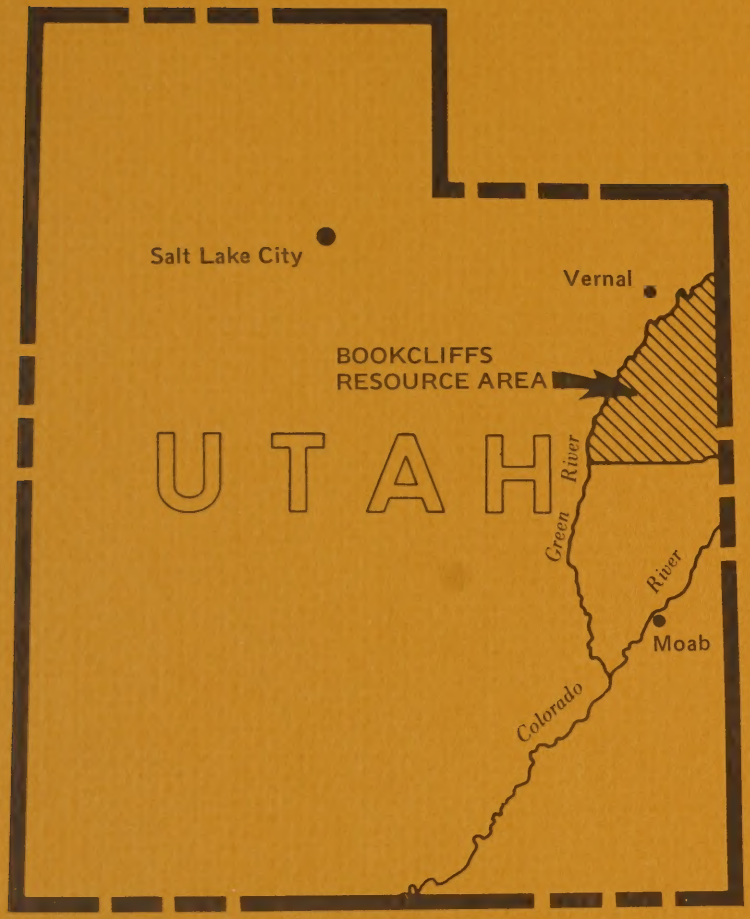


Q. WHERE IS THE BOOKCLIFFS RESOURCE AREA?

A. Located in northeastern Utah, the Bookcliffs Resource Area consists of more than 1,000,000 acres, all within Uintah County. The area is bounded on the east by the Utah-Colorado border, on the north and west by the Green River and on the south by the Uintah County Line.

Averaging only about 8 inches per year, precipitation drains toward two major rivers, the Green and one of its tributaries, the White.

The Bookcliffs Mountains are the dominant land form with elevations to 8,500 feet. Mountain browse vegetates this land form. Contrasting this are lowlands of 4,600 feet elevation. Lowlands support salt desert shrub and the intermediate elevations - pinyon pine and juniper trees.

Dominant present uses are: (1) grazing by livestock, wildhorses and wildlife (2) active energy development of oil and gas with a high potential for development of extensive oil shale and tar sands resources and (3) woodland products, including firewood.

Several species of endangered and threatened fish and other fauna and flora are of particular significance in the Resource Area.

BOOK CLIFFS RESOURCE AREA

B.L.M., VERNAL DISTRICT, UTAH

Scale 1:500,000

4 3 2 1 0 4 8 12 Miles

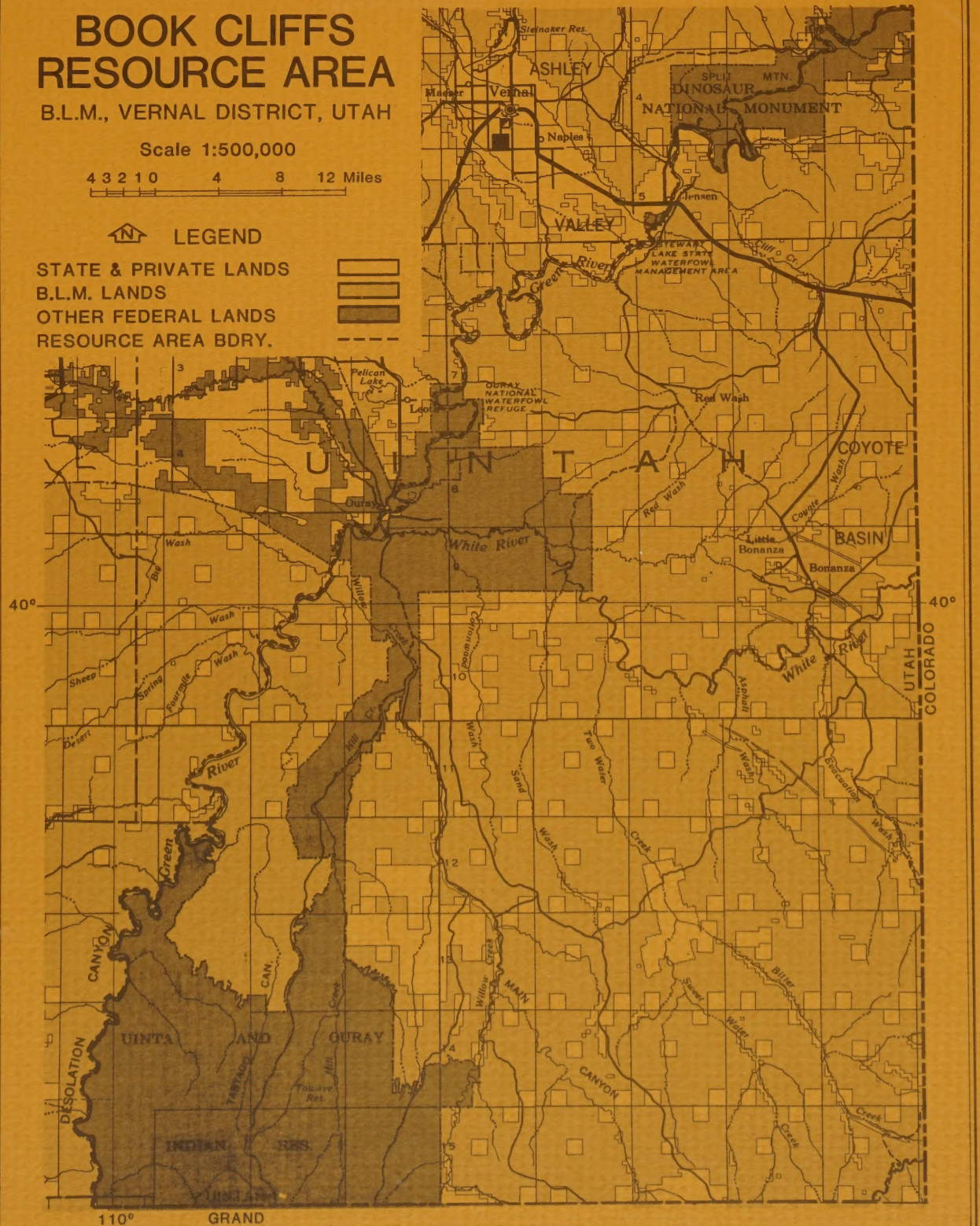
LEGEND

STATE & PRIVATE LANDS

B.L.M. LANDS

OTHER FEDERAL LANDS

RESOURCE AREA BDRY.



Q. **WHAT IS THE BOOKCLIFFS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN?**

A. It is a land use plan. The plan outlines BLM's strategy and decisions for management of the resources on public lands in the Bookcliffs Resource Area. After a number of years, when conditions warrant it, a new management plan, including public input, will be formulated.

BLM will use the plan to determine what resource uses and levels of production should be allowed. Goals are set for the management of the resources. Lands which require limitation of use are identified. Management practices are also outlined.

Q. **WHAT RESOURCES AND USES WILL BE CONSIDERED?**

A. The significant issues for the Bookcliffs Area fall in the following categories presented in random order: (A complete list of the issues is available from the Vernal District BLM Office).

- BLM is required by law to protect scientific, ecological, environmental, and recreation resources and values. Additional mandates exist for restoration and protection of floodplains, wetlands, threatened and endangered species, and potential wilderness values.

- Oil and gas developments are continuing in the Bookcliffs Area and oil shale and tar sand developments are projected to help meet national energy demands. Specific management techniques are required to protect other resource values.

- Development of sand, gravel and topsoil pits are necessary to meet public demand.

- Exchanges, sales, rights-of-way, leases and certain withdrawals may be necessary for proper land management.

- Future growth in the area will necessitate additional recreation facilities, and management of the White and Green Rivers.

- Off-road vehicle use areas need to be identified.

- Fire could be used as a tool to improve the type of forage on certain lands in the resource area.

- Land treatments and developments could improve range management and enhance wildlife habitats and watersheds.

- Forest resources on public lands are becoming more important for providing firewood, fence posts and other forest products.

- Some public land uses are affecting watershed conditions, water quantity, and quality.

- Proper allocation of forage for livestock and big game must be determined for all grazing areas.

Q. **HOW WERE THESE PROBLEMS, ISSUES, OR CONCERNS IDENTIFIED?**

A. BLM provided opportunities for individuals and organizations to voice their own concerns for the management of Bookcliffs Resource Area.

At a meeting in Vernal on April 16, 1980, the County Commissioners and County Energy Director were presented with 30 Bookcliffs planning issues.

Some of the issues were discussed and comments requested.

On May 28, 1980, the same issues were presented to the Vernal District Grazing Advisory Board and their input requested. Comments were also solicited through newspaper articles from a news release on April 8, 1980.

BLM analyzed the public comments and suggestions. In addition to available records of resource conditions, trend, needs, and problems. Based on significance, topics were selected to be addressed during the planning process.

Q. **WHAT IF ADDITIONAL CONCERNS ARE IDENTIFIED AT A LATER DATE?**

A. The identification of issues is a continuous process throughout the development of a Resource Management Plan. Opportunities for public input will be offered at key phases.

Q. **IN SOME CASES, ONE RESOURCE USE COULD CONFLICT WITH ANOTHER RESOURCE USE. HOW WILL BLM RESOLVE THESE CONFLICTS?**

A. BLM has proposed a method which will help the District Manager resolve conflicts and make decisions at the end of the planning process for the Bookcliffs Resource Area. The significant issues have been reviewed and from these issues a set of guidelines has been prepared to (1) determine the information needed to deal with the issues, (2) collect the information both from the field and other sources, and (3) use the information to arrive at the solutions and decisions. **These guidelines will be used to evaluate alternatives for management of the Bookcliffs Resource Area and to select one alternative for the Resource Management Plan. A complete list of the proposed guidelines may be found later in this brochure.**

Q. DO I, AS A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC, HAVE A SAY IN WHAT GUIDELINES WILL BE USED TO DEVELOP THE PLAN FOR THE BOOKCLIFFS RESOURCE AREA?

A. Your comments are requested on how the following proposed guidelines can be improved. Your comments will be fully considered in the BLM planning process.

Q. WHEN AND WHERE SHOULD I SEND MY COMMENTS?

A. If sent by April 15, 1981, comments pertaining to the following proposed guidelines can be fully considered for the final guidelines. All comments are welcome at any time. Comments should be sent to the Vernal District Office, or if you have any questions, feel free to call or write Dean Evans, Bookcliffs Area Manager, (801) 789-1362, 170 South 500 East, Vernal, Utah 84078.

Q. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

A. The public comments will be incorporated into the planning guidelines. These guidelines will then be used to determine what information is needed and how it will be collected during the next two years. The data will be analyzed and a draft plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared for several management alternatives. Following a public review of the alternatives, a final plan and EIS will be issued for the Bookcliffs Resource Area. Based on the issues in random order, a list of the planning guidelines follows:

LEGAL GUIDELINES*

Land management activities on public lands are to be evaluated and conducted in a manner which will:

1. Protect food and habitat for fish and wildlife and the quality of scientific, cultural, recreation, ecological, air, water, soil, vegetation, and scarce resources.

2. Conserve threatened and endangered and sensitive plant and animal species.

3. Restore flood plains and protect and enhance wetlands and riparian habitat.

4. Comply with State and Federal pollution laws.

**New wilderness study guidelines are under development by the Bureau of Land Management, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C.*

ENERGY AND MINERAL GUIDELINES*

Ⓐ Exploration and development of oil and gas will be permitted when surface protection measures are included that will protect other resource values and users. Major considerations include:

1. The ability of the land to be rehabilitated.
2. Present and potential public demand for oil and gas.
3. Coordination with other Federal, State and local government, and Indian tribe land use plans.
4. The capability of present production to meet demand.

Ⓑ Oil shale leases will be categorized on the basis of:

1. Rehabilitation potential.
2. State and county plans.
3. Public interest in oil shale leases.
4. Existing access.
5. Cost effectiveness and socio-economic considerations.
6. The future development of leasing stipulations to protect the environment.

Ⓒ Community pits for sand, gravel and topsoil will be established on the basis of:

1. The demand for salable minerals by local communities, county and commercial development.
2. Areas where no conflicts exist with mining claims.
3. The location of other existing sources of salable materials on private and state land.
4. Access to location of material areas.
5. Extent of known resources.

**Tar Sands Guidelines are under development. The leasing of other salable mineral commodities will be permitted in accordance with the "Legal Guidelines" (preceeding).*

LAND ACTION GUIDELINES

Ⓐ The selection of lands for designation of utility and transportation corridors will be based on:

1. Present and future public demands for rights-of-way.
2. Physical limitations of terrain.
3. Considerations of existing rights-of-way.
4. Engineering design which would reduce proliferation.
5. Federal, State, and county laws, policies, and plans including those of other Indian tribes and other BLM District Offices.

Ⓑ Land disposal practices in the planning area will be based on:

1. The size, access, and location of public lands.
2. The significance of land resources involved.
3. Potential use of the land for urban expansion, agriculture, and transfer to other Federal and State agencies.
4. Improving public land ownership patterns for administrative efficiency.

Ⓒ Land acquisition through exchange in the planning area generally involve:

1. Land that will provide improved access to public lands.
2. Land that will improve the management and administrative efficiency of public lands.

Ⓓ Access by easement acquisition and development of new roads across Federal lands will be dependent on:

1. The amount of public land not accessible.
2. The public demands for use of public land resources.
3. The lack of alternative access routes.
4. The physical capabilities (soils, slope, etc.) of the area for road location.
5. The cost of acquiring access vs. the benefit gained.

RECREATION GUIDELINES

Ⓐ Areas to be open, closed or restricted to ORV use will depend on:

1. Conflicts with other uses and resources.
2. Public demand for different kinds of ORV use such as touring, hunting, trails, and snowmobiling.
3. Capability of soils and vegetation to sustain ORV use.
4. Public safety.
5. Impacts of ORV use on local communities.

Ⓑ Development of recreation sites will be based on:

1. Demonstrated and potential demands for various kinds of recreation sites.
2. Public safety.
3. Cost efficiency vs. benefits gained.
4. Other agency and State plans.
5. Availability of other recreation sources.

Ⓒ Management on the White and Green Rivers will be based on:

1. Present and potential demand for commercial and non-commercial use.
2. The capacity of the river to maintain a quality recreational experience.
3. Public safety.
4. Coordination with other agencies and Indian tribes.

FIRE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Fire management areas will be established on the basis of:

1. The location of hazards to the public and adjacent land owners such as industrial sites, etc.
2. Value at risk classes, in fire management, to determine the value of on-the-ground resources.
3. Cost effectiveness based on the cost of fire control as compared to the benefits derived to the resource.
4. Public opinion toward allowing fires to continue in controlled burns.
5. Physical characteristics, e.g., types of fuel and fire breaks.
6. Range, recreation and other improvements.
7. The ability to remain within State and Federal air quality standards.

LAND TREATMENT AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

Ⓐ Areas to be considered for vegetation manipulation will be based on:

1. Public demand for livestock forage.
2. Public demand for additional wildlife habitat to improve/increase Big Game recreation uses.
3. Cost effectiveness of vegetation manipulation vs. benefits received.
4. Coordination with adjacent land owners.
5. The need to reverse downward trends and improve soil and vegetation conditions.

Ⓑ The completion of range development on public lands will be based on:

1. The need to control livestock grazing and to improve or maintain range condition.
2. The need to improve distribution of wildlife species.
3. The capability of the land (soils, slope, etc.) to support certain range developments.
4. The availability of water resources.
5. The priorities for water use.
6. Cost effectiveness and socio-economic considerations.

FOREST PRODUCTS GUIDELINES

Management of woodland products (posts, firewood, etc.) will be based on:

1. The site capability for production of different products.
2. Access and proximity to population centers.
3. Coordination with plans of State agencies and the Ute Indian tribe.

WATERSHED AND WATER GUIDELINES

(A) Important watershed areas should be managed on the basis of:

1. The value of downstream resources and the potential for flood damage.
2. The capability of watersheds to sustain land uses and maintain site productivity.
3. Improving or maintaining water quality and bank stability.

(B) Water will be provided on public lands according to:

1. Existing water needs for livestock, wildlife, recreation, etc.
2. Projected needs for the above categories.
3. Availability (legal and physical).
4. Potential for development.

FORAGE RESOURCE GUIDELINES

Forage is to be allocated in a manner (amount and season of use) that will improve or maintain vegetation and soil resources, giving major consideration to:

1. Condition and capability of vegetation and soil to sustain existing and potential levels of grazing use.
2. Present and potential public demand for livestock forage, wildlife, recreation, and economic importance to ranching and local communities.
3. Forage allocation problems specifically involving the declining deer population.
4. Intermingled and/or adjacent private, Indian and State land.
5. Availability of water.
6. Existence of wild horses at the time of passage of Public Law 195.

REQUEST FOR YOUR COMMENTS

Please send your comments regarding these proposed planning guidelines to:

Bookcliffs Area Manager
Bureau of Land Management
170 South 700 East
Vernal, Utah 84078

If sent by April 15, 1981, your comments can be considered for the finalized version of the guidelines.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes, fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

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The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management is the principal administrator of public lands, which are mostly in the 11 Western States and Alaska. In Utah, BLM has responsibility for nearly 25 million acres or 47% of the land area. The Bureau administers these lands for recreation, wildlife, minerals, wood, water, forage and the preservation of environmental and cultural values, under principles of multiple use.

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